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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 /076 W
---------- 095126 /46
R 221630Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9262
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BRASILIA 10455

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AINF, PFOR, BR
SUBJ: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF EFFECT ON US POSITION IN BRAZIL
OF RELEASE OF SECRET NATIONAL SECURITY DOCUMENTS

REF: RIO DE JANEIRO 5101 (NOTAL) BRASILIA 10406 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: PUBLICATION OF CLASSIFIED STATE, CIA AND DOD DOCUMENTS ON 1964 REVOLUTION MAY WELL HAVE ADVERSE OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES FOR EMBASSY SINCE THE DISCLOSURES WILL INHIBIT BRAZILIAN SOURCES WHO MIGHT NOW FEAR FUTURE PUBLICATION. THE DISCLOSURES ALSO HAVE PLACED IN AN EMBARRASSING POSITION SOME LEADING BRAZILIAN POLITICAL ACTORS STILL ON THE SCENE WHOSE HERETOFORE SECRET ROLES HAVE BEEN REVEALED OR WHOSE PERSONAL FRAILTIES HAVE BEEN CITED. AT THE SAME TIME THE DOCUMENTS WILL SERVE AS EVIDENCE TO THE CAREFUL BRAZILIAN READER THAT THE US AND THEN AMBASSADOR LINCOLN GORDON HAD NO DIRECT ROLE IN THE 1964 REVOLUTION, AS OFTEN SUPPOSED. US WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE SECRET NATIONAL SECURITY DOCUMENTS WILL BE BOTH APPALLING AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE TO TRADITIONALLY CONFIDENTIAL

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SECRETIVE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT, THE MOST CONSERVATIVE SECTORS OF WHICH WILL SEE THE DISCLOSURES AS AN IMPRUDENT ACT BY A STRANGE AND UNDISCIPLINED SOCIETY. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL EXTREMES OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY MOST LIKELY

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INTERPRET RELEASED DOCUMENTS AND REACT TO THEM IN TERMS OF
OWN IDEOLOGICAL AND COGNITIVE PREDISPOSITIONS. NATIONAL-
ISTIC LEFT WILL SEE THEM AS FURTHER CONFIRMATION OF THEIR
SUPPOSITIONS ABOUT US ROLE IN OVERTHROW OF GOULART AND GENERAL
INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL BRAZILIAN POLITICAL AFFAIRS.
THE MOST CONSERVATIVE SECTORS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND
BRAZILIAN SOCIETY WILL BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED IN THEIR
CONVICTION THAT THE US IS A STRANGE AND
UNDISCIPLINED SOCIETY WHICH IMPRUDENTLY AIDS ITS OWN
ENEMIES BY REVEALING DEEP STATE SECRETS AT THE DROP
OF A HAT. EVEN THOSE LIBERAL SECTORS OF BRAZILIAN SOCIETY
WHO WILL PRAISE US FOR OUR OPENNESS WILL HAVE DOUBTS
ABOUT OUR JUDGMENT.

2. OF PRIMARY INTEREST TO US IS HOW DOCUMENTS WILL BE
INTERPRETED BY BRAZILIANS WHO ARE OPEN-MINDED AND REASONABLY
DISPASSIONATE, BUT POLITICALLY AWARE. WHILE THE DOCUMENTS
ARE ISOLATED, SCATTERED AND EPISODIC, AND IN SOME
CASES HEAVILY CENSORED IN VITAL PARTS, MANY BRAZILIANS WILL
NONETHELESS TRY TO DRAW A COHERENT PICTURE
FROM THESE FRAGMENTS. IT WILL BE CLEAR TO THEM FROM THE DOCUMENTS
THAT THE US HAD EXTENSIVE INTELLIGENCE PENETRATION
IN VITAL SECTORS OF BRAZILIAN MILITARY AND POLITICAL CLASS
AND MANY READERS MAY BE INCLINED TO ASSUME THAT THIS
PENETRATION CONTINUES TO THE PRESENT TIME. THE DOCUMENTS
WILL SHOW THAT THE US AGENCIES IN BRAZIL AT THAT TIME
WERE REMARKABLY ACTIVE AND INVOLVED AND THAT THEIR
REPRESENTATIVES, COVERT AND OVERT, HAD WIDERANGING, DEEP
AND FREQUENT CONTACT WITH KEY BRAZILIAN ELEMENTS,
THOUGH THE DOCUMENTS FAIL TO SHOW THAT THAT HEAVY
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INVOLVEMENT INCLUDED DIRECT SUPPORT OR INSTIGATION OF
THE REVOLUTIONARIES. BUT WHILE THE CAREFUL BRAZILIAN
READER WILL CONCLUDE THAT THE US WAS NOT DIRECTLY
INVOLVED IN THE 1964 REVOLUTION, HE WILL NOTE THAT THE
US HAD AT LEAST ACCEPTED AND BEGUN TO ACT ON THE
CONTINGENCY OF INTERVENING IN BRAZIL. IT WILL ALSO BE QUITE
CLEAR WHICH SIDE THE US WAS READY TO SUPPORT PHYSICALLY,
IF NECESSARY, AND THAT THIS SUPPORT WAS WITHHELD ONLY
BECAUSE IT PROVED EARLY TO BE UNNECESSARY.

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3. ROLE OF AMBASSADOR LINCOLN GORDON IS SHOWN TO BE FAR LESS INSIDIOUS THAN POPULAR BRAZILIAN MYTHOLOGY SINCE 1964 WOULD HAVE IT. OPEN-MINDED BRAZILIANS WILL SEE GORDON'S ROLE WAS MUCH LESS MANIPULATIVE THEN PRESUMED, AND THAT THE US AND GORDON HIMSELF BELIEVED INITIALLY THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE 1964 REVOLUTION WOULD BE A DEMOCRATIC ONE, A CONVICTION WHICH THE READER MAY NOW SEE IN HINDSIGHT AS NAIVE BUT HIGH-MINDED.

4. AS TO EFFECT OF DISCLOSURES ON OUR DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS HERE, WE CAN ONLY CONCLUDE THAT THEY WILL HAVE IMPORTANT ADVERSE OPERATIONAL CONSEQUENCES. WE EXPECT THAT PROMINENT BRAZILIAN POLITICAL ACTORS WILL BE SKITTISH FOR SOME TIME ABOUT BEING CANDID WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS OR INDEED ABOUT EVEN DEALING WITH THE EMBASSY. WHILE WE BELIEVE THAT IN MOST CASES OUR CONTACTS WILL CONTINUE TO TALK TO US, THE QUALITY OF THE INFORMATION THEY PROVIDE COULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED BECAUSE OF GREATER CIRCUMSPECTION INDUCED BY FEAR OF SPEAKING FOR ULTIMATE PUBLICATION. AT SAME TIME WE FEAR THAT SOME LONGSTANDING CONTACTS,
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INCLUDING PARTICULARLY BRAZILIAN NEWSMEN, MAY DRY UP COMPLETELY. PARTICULARLY TOUCHY NOW WILL BE THE EMBASSY'S RELA-TIONSHIP WITH THOSE SOURCES DISCLOSED WHO ARE STILL ACTIVE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE SUCH AS SENATOR MAGALHAES PINTO AND CONGRESS-MEN HERBERT LEVY AND TANCREDO NEVES, SOME OF WHOM WERE SUBJECT OF CUTTING PERSONAL JUDGMENTS IN OFFICIAL EVALUATIONS. WE SEE OUTGOING SENATE PRESIDENT MAGALHAES PINTO, WHO WAS PORTRAYED IN A 1964 CIA REPORT AS A PLOTTER

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AGAINST PRESIDENT CASTELLO BRANCO, AS THE ACTIVE POLITICIAN MOST DAMAGED BY THE DISCLOSURES. JUST BEFORE THE RELEASE OF THE DOCUMENTS, MAGALHAES HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST TO THE AMBASSADOR IN VISITING WASHINGTON IN HIS EXPECTED FUTURE CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE (A TRIP THAT COULD HARDLY BE UNDERTAKEN WITHOUT HIGH LEVEL OFFICIAL APPROVAL).
WE NOW CONSIDER IT LESS LIKELY THAT HE WILL FOLLOW UP ON HIS PLANS.

5. WHILE WE HAVE HAD NO OFFICIAL REACTION, WE FEEL SAFE IN ASSUMING THAT OUR WILLINGNESS TO RELEASE DOCUMENTS THAT BY MOST TEXTS ARE SENSITIVE WILL APPALL THE GOB, WHICH BY ITS NATURE IS VERY SECRETIVE AND WHICH HAS IN PAST MANIFESTED CONCERN OVER THE US RELEASE OF 25-YEAR OLD DOCUMENTS IN THE "FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE U.S." SERIES. IN THESE QUARTERS WE SUSPECT THAT OUR BEST AND MOST COGENT EFFORTS TO EXPLAIN FOI AND OUR PROCEDURES WILL BE UNAVAILING IN OVERCOMING DEEP BEWILDERMENT AS TO HOW SUCH DISCLOSURES ARE POSSIBLE.

6. FROM THE STANDPOINT OF OUR POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES HERE, WE NOTE WITH REGRET THAT THE EMBASSY HAD NO ADVANCE WARNING OF THE IMPENDING RELEASE AND WAS THUS UNABLE TO WARN THE GOB IN ADVANCE. IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IN THE FUTURE IF WHEN IMPORTANT OR SENSITIVE DOCUMENTS ARE BEING REVIEWED FOR RELEASE--IF, INDEED THERE IS A SUBSTANTIVE REVIEW AT ALL-- THE EMBASSY, OR FAILING THIS THE COUNTRY DIRECTORATE,
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WERE TO BE CONSULTED. WHILE WE ARE MINDFUL OF THE IMPERATIVES OF FOI AND MOST CERTAINLY ARE COMMITTED TO ADHERING TO THEM, WE BELIEVE THAT SOME RELATIVELY MINOR EXCISIONS COULD HAVE BEEN MADE THAT WOULD HAVE SAVED SOME EMBARRASSMENT LOCALLY WITHOUT DAMAGING THE INTEGRITY OF THE INFORMATION. A PRIME EXAMPLE ARE THOSE BRIEF, OFTEN PARENTHETICAL, AND AT TIMES EVEN GRATUITOUS COMMENTS ON PERSONAL FRAILTIES OF LEADING POLITICAL ACTORS, SOME OF WHOM STILL ON SCENE, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN REMOVED WITHOUT SERIOUS LOSS OF SUBSTANCE.
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